AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An optical component, comprising one ~~or more retarders~~ retarder having embedded therein a plurality of images, the images being so arranged that, at any point in the plane of the component, ~~an element of~~ not more than one image is present, each image being associated with a different interaction with polarized light.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) An optical component according to Claim 1, wherein the images [[are]] embedded in the retarder ~~one or more retarder(s) having~~ have specific image patterns each having a different optical axis from the other specific image patterns.

4. (Previously Presented) An optical component according to Claim 1, wherein the respective images are contained in alternate areas.

5. (Withdrawn) An optical component according to Claim 1, wherein the respective images are contained in successive optionally parallel stripes.

6. (Currently Amended) An optical component according to Claim 4, 5, or 15 [[or 5]], wherein the areas or stripes are smaller or narrower than [[the]] an eye can resolve, and wherein ~~one or more image(s)~~ at least one of said images is a ~~is/are (a)~~ photographic image ~~image(s)~~.

7. (Currently Amended) An optical component according to Claim 4, 5, or 15 [[or 5]], wherein there are an integral number n of images, each respectively being represented on every nth stripe or nth area.

8. (Currently Amended) An optical component according to Claim 1, ~~An element~~ wherein the optical component is used for protection against at least one of forgery ~~and/or~~ and copying~~, which comprises an optical component according to Claim 1~~.

9. (Withdrawn) A viewing system, comprising a source of polarized light, an optical component according to Claim 1, through which component the polarized light can travel, and an analyzer for light which has traversed the optical component, that analyzer being rotatable about the axis of the direction of travel of the light; whereby, by rotating the analyzer, peaks of maximum contrasts for each image are obtained at specific rotation angles of the analyzer, enabling, at each such angle, visualization of a respective image not otherwise visible.

10. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 9, wherein the source of polarized light is a polarizing sheet applied to the surface of the component.

11. (Withdrawn) A system according to Claim 9, wherein the analyzer is a polarizing sheet.

12. (Withdrawn) A viewing system, comprising a reflector that maintains the polarization direction of incident light, an optical element according to Claim 1 attached to said reflector, and a polarizer that is rotatable about the axis of the direction of travel of the light, such that light which has traversed the polarizer and the optical component is reflected at said reflector and traverses a second time the optical component and said polarizer; whereby, by rotating said polarizer, peaks of maximum contrasts for each image are obtained at specific rotation angles of the polarizer, enabling, at each such angle, visualization of a respective image not otherwise visible.

13. (Currently Amended) An optical component according to Claim [[2]] 1, wherein the images [[are]] embedded in the ~~retarders having~~ retarder have specific image patterns, each having a different optical axis from the other specific image patterns.

14. (Currently Amended) An optical component according to Claim 6, wherein there are an integral number n of [[n]] images, each respectively being represented on every nth stripe or nth area.

15. (New) An optical component according to Claim 1, wherein the respective images are contained in successive alternate optionally parallel stripes.